

MCCONNELL who has allowed more votes in 1 day than the Republicans got from Senator REID the entire year last year. We probably doubled the number of votes this year than we had all of last year.

The Democrats are saying, we are not even going to go to this bill that would fund Homeland Security. And if we don't go to it, then Homeland Security is not funded. Are they going to block a bill that would fund Homeland Security?

Senator MCCONNELL is saying you can have your relevant amendment. If you don't like the language the House put in that says the money can only go to fund lawful activities, then you can vote to take it out and offer an amendment to take it out; but if you don't have the votes, you lose. That is the way the system should work.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

#### EMPLOYER WELLNESS PROGRAMS: BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES AND LOWER COSTS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of my remarks at the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing yesterday be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

##### EMPLOYER WELLNESS PROGRAMS: BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES AND LOWER COSTS

This morning we are holding a hearing entitled "Employer Wellness Programs: Better Health Outcomes and Lower Costs."

Ranking Member Murray and I will each have an opening statement, then we will introduce our panel of witnesses. I ask that each of our witnesses limit their testimony to no more than five minutes. We will conclude the hearing at noon.

About half of Americans, or 149 million, have health insurance through an employer. One thing we agree upon is that it's a good thing for employers to encourage employees to be healthier. There are a few ways that employers can do this. Offering employees free gym memberships, access to weight loss coaches, and on-site nurses, to name a few. Today, we're going to hear from employers who offer lower cost insurance if their employees lead a healthy lifestyle.

Obamacare was not a bipartisan law, but it did include a bipartisan provision to strengthen workplace wellness programs. Former Senator Harkin and I worked together on this during the HELP Committee markup of Obamacare. Before Obamacare, employers relied upon a 2006 regulation which empowered them to discount employee premiums up to 20 percent.

Today, employers have certainty of law that they can give their employees up to 30 percent off of their premiums if they make healthy lifestyle choices like maintaining a healthy weight or keeping their cholesterol levels in check. The law also gave the Secretaries of Labor and Health the authority to extend this discount to 50 percent off through regulations. And the Secretaries did just that for tobacco cessation, so companies can also give employees who are smoke-free a 50 percent discount off their premiums.

But these discount programs aren't a blank check. By law, employers have to meet several conditions. First, they cannot discriminate. Employers must make these programs available to everyone and must provide a reasonable alternative if an employee cannot complete the standard requirement. Second, they have to be designed to promote health. So, your boss can't offer a reward for a better job performance, but she can do so if you stop smoking. Third, everyone should have a chance to qualify at least once a year.

To get started, employees might simply fill out a questionnaire about themselves and their family's medical history, or undergo a basic health screening to take their weight, temperature, blood pressure, as well as a finger prick test for cholesterol or diabetes. This information provides employees a baseline from which to work with a medical professional to improve.

Today, we will seek to answer several questions. First, how well are these programs working? A 2014 study conducted for Interactive Health found 85% of 15,550 people surveyed either improved or maintained their level of health risk and companies' health care costs rose 6% more slowly. A September 2014 survey by the benefits consulting firm of Towers Watson & Co. found that 18% of employers already use outcomes-based wellness incentives and 48% plan to add one by 2017.

Next, we want to explore if any of these programs need to be changed. There are a number of laws and regulations on the books governing wellness programs, but do employers have all the tools they need?

And we want to hear how a disturbing turn of events may affect these programs. Specifically, the action the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is taking against companies like Honeywell for encouraging employees to lead a healthier lifestyle. I'm concerned the government is encouraging workplace wellness on one hand, and discouraging it on the other.

There is a great deal of evidence that tells us these programs can make employees healthier and happier at work, and for the investment employers make, they can see lower health care costs.

Honeywell has a wellness program that is reportedly compliant with Obamacare, provides for reasonable alternative accommodations, and protects patient privacy. And, it's working to improve employee health. 61 percent of Honeywell employees identified with more than one health risk factor eliminated at least one of those risk factors; and 46 percent eliminated all of their risk factors.

What's wrong with that? Well, the EEOC seemingly believes employers should not reward employees who make healthy lifestyle choices with lower premiums. And in October last year, the general counsel sued to stop Honeywell from doing just that.

Even the White House has expressed concern regarding the EEOC's actions. In December, when asked about the president's thoughts on the EEOC wellness lawsuits, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said the administration is concerned EEOC's actions are, or could be, "inconsistent with what we know about wellness programs and the fact that we know that wellness programs are good for both employers and employees."

Congress was clear in the health care law. The administration was clear in the regulations. And the White House has again reiterated its support for these programs. But apparently that is not clear enough for the EEOC. The EEOC is sending a confusing message to employers—reliance on Obamacare's authorization of wellness programs does not mean you won't be sued.

So, I'm working on legislation to provide employers and employees even more clarity and certainty to continue to offer these voluntary wellness programs and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. Innovation and healthy choices should be applauded, not punished.

Workplace wellness programs give individuals some control over rising health care costs. Instead of watching powerlessly as more money comes out of their paychecks each month to cover rising health insurance premiums—wellness programs give individuals the ability to regain some control over those costs.

I admit that this represents a big shift in how we think about the workplace in relation to our health. There has been a sea change in how we talk about health at work. I remember well the smoke in the hallways of the Nixon White House. That was true in most workplaces then. These days, about the only workplace you can smoke is the Speaker's office.

#### REMEMBERING CHIP KENNETT

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I wish to pay tribute to Bayard Winslow "Chip" Kennett II, a native of Conway, N.H., who passed away on January 17 at the age of 34.

Growing up in the Mount Washington Valley, Chip was a fantastic student-athlete and natural leader. At A. Crosby Kennett High School, one of two schools in Conway which bears his family name, Chip quarterbacked the Kennett High School football team and was honored with the Jack Burns Memorial Award for leadership, dedication and loyalty to his teammates on the Kennett High baseball team. His parents, Bayard and Theresa, instilled in Chip a love for the region and its people, and Chip spent his summers volunteering and working at Conway's community recreation center.

Chip would later go on to a career in public service that spanned close to a decade, rising from a college internship with then-New Hampshire Representative John Sununu to a position in Senator Judd Gregg's office, after which he returned to work for John Sununu upon his election to the Senate. Before leaving Capitol Hill to join Raytheon's government affairs practice, Chip most recently worked for Maine Senator SUSAN COLLINS as her military legislative assistant and director of appropriations. During his time in Washington, Chip was active in the New Hampshire State Society, helping to raise funds for New Hampshire students hoping to intern in the Nation's capital as he had during college. All those who knew him in the Senate recall his upbeat and caring nature, both qualities that buoyed him and his family through the difficulties of the past 2 years.